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order to make a shift of elected invention, as discussed in greater detail below.

Claims 1 to 12, 39 to 46, 55, 57 to 59, 65 to 76 and 87 now are presented for examination. Claim 1, 39, 55, 65 and 68 are the independent claims. Claims 13 to 38, 47 to 54, 56 and 77 to 86 have been canceled. Claims 55 and 57 to 59 have been amended.

In response to a prior restriction requirement, Applicants provisionally elected Claims 55 to 59 for prosecution in the parent application.

In an Official Action dated November 20, 2000, in parent Application No. 09/317,409, the prior restriction requirement was made final, Claim 56 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as indefinite, Claim 55 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,857,405 (Cordova), Claims 55 to 59 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as anticipated by or, in the alternative under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 4,695,501 (Robinson), and Claims 55 to 59 further were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 4,539,253 (Hirschbueler). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections respectfully are requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Initially, Applicants' undersigned attorney gratefully acknowledges the courtesies extended to him by Examiners Befumo and Juska in granting a personal interview on February 28, 2001. In that interview, Applicants' attorney discussed various novel features of the present invention, distinguished the claimed invention over the cited art, and discussed various claim amendments to obviate the various outstanding objections/rejections and to place at least the elected claims in condition for allowance.

Applicants' attorneys also gratefully acknowledge the courtesies extended to them by Examiners Befumo, Juska and SPRE Examiner Morriss in granting a follow-up personal interview on March 21, 2001, in which Applicants' attorneys presented for inspection a number of sample stiffness treated and non-stiffness treated fabrics and sample honeycomb core sandwich structure panels covered by the claimed invention. In that interview, various alternative amendments to the elected claims were discussed to further clarify the claimed subject matter. It was agreed that the proposed amendments to the elected claims obviated the outstanding rejections of the elected claims; however, it was agreed that Applicants would file a CPA/Divisional application, together with a Preliminary Amendment, to permit a modification/shift in election and to

permit possible rejoinder of certain non-elected claims in the continuation/divisional application.

Accordingly, without conceding the propriety of the outstanding rejections, Claims 55 and 57 to 59 have been amended herein more clearly to recite various novel features of the present invention, as discussed in the personal interviews. Support for the proposed amendments may be found in the original application. No new matter has been added.

The present invention relates to a novel prepreg of a honeycomb sandwich structure precursor including a honeycomb core and a stiffness-treated prepreg ply. In one aspect, as now recited in independent Claim 55, the stiffness-treated prepreg ply comprises a stiffness-treated fabric including a plurality of fibers and a polymeric material disposed on at least some of the fibers, where the stiffness-treated fabric exhibits an ASTM stiffness value greater than the ASTM stiffness value of an untreated fabric, and a resin system; in this aspect, the stiffness-treated prepreg ply, when disposed on a second prepreg ply comprising a resin system and a fabric selected from the group consisting of the stiffness-treated fabric and untreated fabrics, exhibits a frictional resistance between the stiffness-treated prepreg ply and the second prepreg ply sufficiently greater than the frictional resistance between two untreated prepreg plies disposed on one another, where each of the two

untreated prepreg plies comprises the resin system and an untreated fabric, so as to enhance resistance to core crush during fabrication of a honeycomb core structure from the honeycomb core structure precursor.

Applicants submit that the prior art fails to anticipate the present invention. Moreover, Applicants submit that there are differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art, such that the subject matter taken as a whole would not have been obvious at the time the invention was made to one of ordinary skill in the art.

As discussed in greater detail in the personal interview, each of the cited references merely discloses or suggests a coated or treated fiber, or fabric, and fails to disclose or suggest at least the above-discussed honeycomb core structure precursor/prepreg features of the claimed invention.

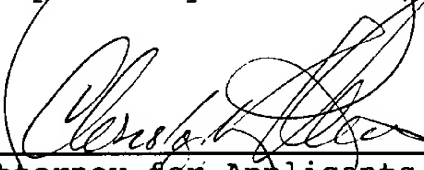
For the above reasons, Applicants submit that independent Claim 55 is allowable over the cited art.

Claims 57 to 59 depend from Claim 55 and are believed allowable for the same reasons. Moreover, each of these dependent claims recites additional features in combination with the features of Claim 55, and is believed allowable in its own right. Individual consideration of the dependent claims respectfully is requested.

Applicants submit that the present Preliminary Amendment is responsive to each of the points raised by the Examiners in the above-referenced Official Action and personal interviews, and that the present continued prosecution application (CPA/Divisional) is in condition for allowance. Reconsideration/modification of the restriction/election to include amended Claims 55 and 57 to 59 (and any further pending claims having a common classification/invention), favorable consideration of the claims, and passage to issue of the present application at the Examiner's earliest convenience earnestly are solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attorney for Applicants

Registration No. 32,078

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO  
30 Rockefeller Plaza  
New York, New York 10112-3801  
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE TO THE CLAIMS

55. (Amended) A prepreg of a honeycomb sandwich structure precursor including a honeycomb core, a stiffness-treated prepreg ply and a second prepreg ply, said stiffness-treated prepreg ply comprising:

a stiffness-treated fabric including a plurality of fibers and a polymeric material disposed on at least some of the fibers, where the stiffness-treated fabric exhibits an ASTM stiffness value greater than the ASTM stiffness value of an untreated fabric; and

a resin system,

wherein the stiffness-treated prepreg ply, when disposed on a second prepreg ply comprising a resin system and a fabric selected from the group consisting of the stiffness-treated fabric and untreated fabrics, exhibits a frictional resistance between the stiffness-treated prepreg ply and the second prepreg ply sufficiently greater than the frictional resistance between two untreated prepreg plies disposed on one another, where each of the two untreated prepreg plies comprises the resin system and an untreated fabric, so as to enhance resistance to core crush during fabrication of a honeycomb core structure from the honeycomb core structure precursor.

57. (Amended) The [stiffness-treated] prepreg [ply] according to claim 56, wherein the frictional resistance between the stiffness-treated prepreg ply and the second prepreg ply is between 50 pounds and 175 pounds as measured by the Boeing-Wilhelm method [(Boeing-Wilhelm method)].

58. (Amended) The [stiffness-treated] prepreg [ply] according to claim 56, wherein the frictional resistance between the stiffness-treated prepreg ply and the second prepreg ply is between 75 pounds and 175 pounds as measured by the Boeing-Wilhelm method [(Boeing-Wilhelm method)].

59. (Amended) The [stiffness-treated] prepreg [ply] according to claim 56, wherein the frictional resistance between the stiffness-treated prepreg ply and the second prepreg ply is between 100 pounds and 150 pounds as measured by the Boeing-Wilhelm method [(Boeing-Wilhelm method)].

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